

APA Format Quick Guide

(Pulled 7 Aug 2019)

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Video Tutorial links:

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Formatting

- One-inch margins
- Times New Roman, 12-point font throughout (including running head and page numbers).
- Indent all paragraphs in the body of the paper ½"; do not indent the abstract paragraph.
- Double-space throughout, with no extra spacing before or after lines.
- Note that MS Word's default setting adds extra spacing after each paragraph. To correct this, highlight the entire paper, click on the Home tab, then the arrow at the bottom of the paragraph tab and set the "before" and "after" paragraph spacing to zero (see the [general formatting video tutorial](#)).

Style

- Use active voice, rather than [passive voice](#).
- Be specific and concise.
- Avoid poetic or figurative language; scientific writing is the most appropriate for APA.
- Use past or present perfect tense (e.g., researchers have shown) for a literature review and description, and past tense when referring to results and experiments previously conducted (see pp. 77-79 of your APA manual).
- Title case = all significant words, usually those with 4+ letters, must be capitalized (see section 2.01 on page 23 of your APA manual). Title case is used for titles of works mentioned in the body of your paper, and for the names of journals in your reference list. Levels 1 and 2 headings also use title case.
- Sentence case = only the first letter of the first word, proper nouns, and the word following a colon, if any, should begin with capital letters. Sentence case is used for all resource titles in the reference list (i.e., book or article titles, webpages, etc.). Levels 3, 4, and 5 headings use sentence case.

- Use quotation marks around the titles of shorter works (i.e., articles or poems) and italics for the names of larger works (i.e., books or plays) mentioned in the body of your paper.

Title Page

- “Running head:” (without the quotation marks) and SHORTENED TITLE (in all caps as shown) flush left, with page number flush right at top of title page (see the [running heads video tutorial](#))
- On subsequent pages, omit the phrase “Running head:”
- Center the following information in the upper half of the title page (not the middle of the page; approximately four double-spaced lines down from the top):

Title of Paper With no More Than 12 Words in Title Case

Your Name

Name of Institution (e.g., Liberty University)

Abstract

- The abstract is contained on its own page without any other content. Generally speaking, an abstract is required unless your professor or instructions explicitly specify otherwise.
- Center the word “Abstract” on the first line, without quotation marks or bolding. It is a section title, not heading.
- Generally, 150-250 words, unless otherwise specified by your professor or instructions.
- It should be a brief but comprehensive summary of the paper.
- Do not indent the first line of the abstract.
- The abstract is not an introduction to the paper and should not contain any citations.
- See pp. 25-27 of the APA manual for what information to include in an abstract, and Liberty University’s [Writing an Abstract](#) aid.
- If required, on the line under the abstract paragraph, indent 1/2” and insert the word *Keywords* (italicized as shown), followed by a colon. Then, insert 3-6 of your paper’s keywords (e.g., trauma, attachment), separated by commas. The keywords themselves should not be italicized.

Main Body

- Before beginning writing the body of your paper, center the paper’s title on the first line in title case, without bold font, exactly as it appears on the title page. The title is also a section title, not a heading, which is why it is not bolded.
- Your introductory paragraph/section, if you have one, will begin on the next line. Note that APA expressly forbids using introduction as a heading (see section 3.03 on page 63 of the APA manual); just type that paragraph under the paper’s title without any heading. Professors always trump APA, so if your professor requires a heading labeled Introduction, then include it.

Headings

- APA papers use headings to separate paper sections and establish a hierarchy of information. Short papers (usually five pages or less in the body of the paper) may not have any headings unless required, but longer papers benefit from the organizational aspects of headings. See the [APA headings video tutorial](#).
- Always begin with Level 1 headings (see p. 62 of your APA manual) and apply the appropriate heading and subheading levels from there. Do not simply progress from Level 1 to Level 2 to Level 3.
- For each heading, include at least two subsection headings or none at all. This follows the same principle as an outline: Section one would be divided into sections A and B or more; A cannot stand alone.
- A paper may only have Level 1 headings if it is not divided into smaller subsections — or the content under some Level 1 headings may include two or more Level 2 headings (and some content under Level 2 headings may include two or more Level 3 headings).
 - **Level 1:** centered, boldface, in title case
 - **Level 2:** left-aligned, boldface, in title case
 - **Level 3:** indented, boldface, sentence case with a period, then two spaces, and begin your content on the same line
 - **Level 4:** indented, boldface, italicized, sentence case with a period, then two spaces, and begin your content on the same line
 - **Level 5:** indented, italicized, sentence case with a period, then two spaces, and begin your content on the same line

In-Text Citations

- An in-text citation is used whenever another author's work is directly quoted or paraphrased.
- Citations for paraphrases use an author/date format: (Author, Publication Year), e.g. (Smith, 2007).
- The citation for a direct quote should also include the page number: (Author, Year, p. #). If no page number is available (as in the case of an online webpage), list the paragraph: (Author, Year, para. 11).
- You can move information from the in-text citations to other parts of the sentence that the quote is part of as long as all required elements are present: e.g. Smith (2007) says, "arrows are sharp" (p. 8). However, the date *always* follows the author's/authors' name(s), unless APA's exception applies for subsequent citations of the same resource in a paragraph in which the first such citation was narrative/in-text (not parenthetical; see sections 6.11 and 6.12 on pages 174-175 of your APA manual, and detailed explanation in the bottom half of p. 8 of Liberty University's [sample APA paper](#)).
- The page number *always* follows a direct quote, even if these elements are split within your sentence. For example, Smith and Harlow (2011) elaborated on this by suggesting that "paper planes can float" (p. 8). Owen (2017) posited that "foxes can fly" (p. 17) in her dream analysis.

- Any quotation longer than 39 words should be made into a freestanding “block” of text, with no quotation marks (see p. 171 of your APA manual and p. 9 of Liberty University’s [sample APA paper](#)).
- The entire left margin of block quotes should be indented one-half inch as a whole “block” (with no extra indent on the first line). See the [in-text citations video tutorial](#).
- The parenthetical citation with the page number on block quotes follows the quote and period, with no additional punctuation after it (unlike shorter quotes, where the parenthetical citation falls within the sentence itself with the period following it).
- For example, Owen (2017) explained that:

There are two competing schools of thoughts involving children who have experienced early childhood trauma. One posture’s nosology focuses on the posttraumatic stress responses; the other focuses on the deviant behaviors that ensue from pathogenic care in early childhood. [She thus] sought to review the literature from a holistic perspective, embracing both diagnostic positions. (p. 2)

- If no author is given, use a shortened version of the title in the citation rather than an author’s name. Note that this is very uncommon; you may need to sleuth around a bit to discern the author(s) of a resource, but the Internet makes this relatively easy.
- If the publication date is unknown, use “n.d.” in its place (include the periods, but not the quotation marks).
- For works with 3 to 5 authors, list all authors’ last names (surnames) in the first citation: e.g. (Smith, Jones, & Brown, 2010). In subsequent citations, list the first author’s surname and “et al.”: e.g. (Smith et al., 2010). Note that al. is an abbreviation for alli, which is why it has a period and et does not.
- For citations that have 6 or more authors, cite the surname of the first author followed by “et al.” in text for even the first citation, as if you had already named the authors: e.g. (Arden et al., 2012).

Bible

- When citing the Bible in-text, spell out the full version the first time you use it (see Section 6.18, pp. 178-179 of your APA manual), and then omit it in future citations, unless you change versions. For example, Philippians 2:14 commands us to “Do everything without complaining and arguing” (New Living Translation). James 1:27 proclaims that “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.” Galatians 5:22 says that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness” (New American Standard). Note that there is no translation cited for the middle quote, since it was also taken from the NLT, which was specified in the immediately-preceding citation as well.
- Technically, it would not be necessary or proper to include any version when you paraphrase the Bible because all versions essentially say the same message in each verse, so a paraphrase of one would apply equally to all versions. However, the APA manual is not explicitly clear that this rule only applies to direct quotes, and for the

sake of consistency and curbing confusion, the OWC has opted to advise students to include the version the first time, even for paraphrases.

- Likewise, the APA manual and its Style Experts are inconsistent regarding whether there should be a comma after the verse if the version is included in the same set of parentheses. The OWC recommends that a comma be included between the verse and version if those are in the same set of parentheses. For example, Jesus “came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b, New American Standard).
- Do not include the Bible or other classical works in the reference list.

References

- Center the word “References” (without quotation marks or bold font) on the top line of a new page following your conclusion. This term is also a section title; not a heading.
- Use hanging indents (the first line of each entry should be left-justified, with lines two+ indented ½” from the left margin). See the [reference entries video tutorial](#).
- Alphabetize all entries by the first word in each (usually the first author’s last name for each).
- There should only be one space after periods in the reference list entries (two spaces after closing punctuation in the body of the paper).
- If a work has more than 7 authors, list the first 6 followed by an ellipsis (...). Include the last author’s name immediately after the ellipsis as the final author mentioned. Do not include an ampersand (&) in references with 8 or more authors.
- Do not include reference entries for classical works (including the Bible) and personal communication.
- Do not include a period after a URL or DOI.
- Note that the issue number of a journal article should be connected/attached to the volume number — e.g., 12(8). The volume number should be italicized, but the attached parentheses and issue number should not.
- Check [Google Scholar](#) or [Crossref](#) for DOIs of all articles published since 2007, if one is not readily denoted on the article itself.
- Note that you must include a comma after the author’s name that precedes the ampersand in the reference list, even when there are only two authors. This does not apply to citations in the body of the paper.
- Only include the access date for online content that is likely to change (such as wikis).
- Do not include static hyperlinks, which require log-on credentials to access, unless required by your assignment. This includes ezproxy links obtained from searches in the Liberty University Online Library.

[Reference List Examples](#)

Material on this page adapted from the Sixth Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.